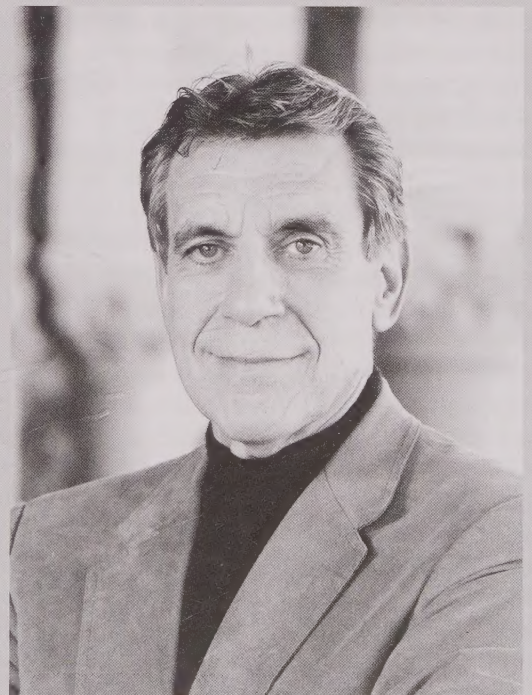


Last thing Jesus would have wanted



*Catholic
scholar
'catches up'
to Unitarians*



Thomas Sheehan

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The INQUIRER

THE UNITARIAN AND FREE CHRISTIAN PAPER

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The Inquirer is the oldest

Nonconformist religious newspaper

"To promote a free and inquiring religion through the worship of God and the celebration of life; the service of humanity and respect for all creation; and the upholding of the liberal Christian tradition."

*From the Object passed at the
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Inquiring Words

'At no other time (than autumn) does the earth
let itself be inhaled in one smell, the ripe earth; in
a smell that is in no way inferior to the smell of
the sea, bitter where it borders on taste, and more
honeysweet where you feel it touching the first
sounds. Containing depth within itself, darkness,
something of the grave almost.'

— Rainer Maria Rilke
Letters on Cézanne

Jesus in words

Son of God? Son of man? Miracle worker?

Prophetic teacher? So much is believed about Jesus,
yet still so much is unknown.

As Frank Walker writes in this issue, Thomas
Sheehan is among scholars who are considering the
evolving legacy of Jesus.

What is your view of Jesus? How does that relate to
the Unitarian faith? Has your view changed through
the years?

Share your ideas with readers of *The Inquirer* in
December's 'Faith in Words' issue. It can be just
a few sentences, or up to 400 words. Please send
typed contributions via post (editor's address, left)
or email: inquirer@btinternet.com

Faith in Words

Contributions for the annual 'Faith in Words'
Christmas issue are also welcome. Please send
prayers, addresses, meditations, art work,
photographs – anything that relates to the birth of
Jesus, Solstice, Hanukkah, Winter or the other ways
we mark the season

New contributors are most welcome. For more
information or to submit material, email:

Inquirer@btinternet.com Or, send typed
contributions to the editor's postal address at left.

Contributions due on 2 November

Thomas Sheehan, 'heretical' Catholic

By Frank Walker

Unitarians used to say, 'The religion of Jesus, not the religion about Jesus.' This has been mocked by their critics as simplistic. The religion of Jesus was first-century Judaism with its animal sacrifices in the Temple. We certainly wouldn't want that. But we would still wish to explore the teaching of Jesus about the kingdom of God, that it was 'at hand, within you and among you.' So it is encouraging to find a distinguished Roman Catholic Biblical scholar and philosopher who would certainly support this old-fashioned Unitarian preference.

He is Thomas Sheehan, professor of religious studies at Stanford University, California. He is best known for his brilliant and disconcerting book, *The First*

Coming: How the Kingdom of God Became Christianity, an enthralling (and to some, shocking) account of Christian origins. He is also a leading interpreter and exponent of the philosophy of Martin Heidegger. He was born in California in 1941, the son of a Catholic Italian seamstress and an Irish Catholic father who was first a hod-carrier and later a trade union organiser and activist. He says, 'I could no more not be Catholic than I could not be Irish.'

He was educated for the priesthood at a local seminary where he was active in his opposition to the Vietnam War. As a protest against the draft (though as a seminarian he was exempt) he deliberately undertook alternative service. In his late teens he withdrew from the seminary by mutual consent and continued his studies at University of California at Berkeley, and then at the leading Jesuit university in New York, Fordham, where he took his Ph.D.

He then taught philosophy and religious studies at Loyola, a Catholic university in Chicago which also has a campus in Rome, where Sheehan spent half of every year. Sheehan is a Fellow of the Jesus Seminar, a group of scholars that includes both Protestant and Catholic as well as non-Christian members who try to discover, as far as is humanly possible, what the historical Jesus actually said and did.

Pius allowed startling change

In 1943 Pope Pius XII issued the encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu*. This gave Catholic scholars permission to use contemporary scientific methods in their work. It ended many decades of enforced Catholic conservatism in Biblical matters. A liberal consensus has emerged which conflicts with traditional Catholic doctrine. As a result of its scientific investigations its conclusions are (to Catholics) startling. The Gospels are not exact historical records. They are not eyewitness accounts



Photo by Jean Scheijen via freeimages.com

of what Jesus said and did, but products of later believers during the second and third centuries whose faith greatly coloured their accounts of Jesus.

Scholars openly admit that the stories of the birth of Jesus are fictional, and that Jesus never claimed to be the Messiah (Christ), or the Son of Man, or the Son of God. He made no claim that he pre-existed from all eternity as the second person of the Trinity. He knew nothing about the Trinity and never mentioned it in his teachings. (Conclusions which seem to be in line with what Unitarians have been saying for hundreds of years).

I first encountered Thomas Sheehan through reading his chapter *From Divinity to Infinity* in the book *The Once and*

Future Jesus, a book of essays by members of the Jesus Seminar. It is intensely provocative. He suggests the word 'God' could be 'a marker for the full unfolding of all the natural and social powers of humankind... What then would faith be? Would it mean believing the unbelievable? Holding to propositions that we cannot fully comprehend? Or might it be trust in and commitment to the endless tasks of justice and mercy without need of transcendent motivation or sanctions?'

The last thing Jesus wanted

The most startling assertion in his book *The First Coming* concerns the failure of Simon Peter and his denial of Jesus after his arrest as recounted in the Gospels. According to Sheehan this temporary denial was not his greatest mistake. His greatest mistake was turning Jesus into the last thing that Jesus wanted to be: a hero and an idol. Jesus himself preached the kingdom of God, but Simon Peter took Jesus for the kingdom and thereby mistook the kingdom itself. He forgot what Jesus was about: that God was present wherever justice and mercy were enacted, and that the kingdom-of-God-with-man was not any one person, no matter how extraordinary that person might be. God becomes incarnate not in one particular man, but wherever men and women change the way they live and enact justice and mercy in human lives.

So Christianity is about 'not God or Christ or Jesus of Nazareth, but the endless, unresolvable mystery inscribed on the heart of being human', the never-ending enactment of justice and mercy. God pushes you away in the direction of each other.

In the modern world Sheehan says this kind of Christianity is most clearly seen in the practical application of liberation theology in Latin America

(Continued on next page)

Christianity, an unresolvable mystery

(Continued from previous page)

where priests and nuns are reading the Gospels with their people as texts of liberation.

He says, 'they see that you can't separate spiritual liberation from political and social justice. I don't claim to be a believer in their sense of holding to life after death, but in practical terms what is the difference? Whether or not there is a life after death is out of our hands. We should be worried about whether there is life before death.'

So is he a Christian? His answer is that official Christianity comes after Jesus. Like Unitarians he finds his inspiration in the religion of Jesus and his teaching about the kingdom of God, not in the developed religion about Jesus. He does not believe that Jesus is the absolute Saviour; nevertheless he still counts himself as a small 'c' catholic. He believes that even if one has a demythologised understanding of Jesus one cannot live without a community, without a tradition. Irish-Italian Catholicism was the culture into which he was born, and he has no desire to throw it away. He has none of the angry atheism of some Dostoyevsky character. Alongside the Catholic church he grew up to share his father's trade-union socialism and so feels very much at home in the Catholic Worker community. 'There, no one worries about your theology. When you say "amen" that means you're willing to do your part in the soup kitchen.'

He has faith in this sense: 'Faith is not some belief or mental conviction. It is action in the world. I won't know if I have faith until I go out into the

street and a homeless person comes up to me and says, 'You got a buck?' If I say I'm busy, that I have to get to the el, (elevated railway) – to me that means not having faith.'

It would be pointless to accuse him of being a heretic since he frankly admits that his interpretation of the kingdom of God is not traditional or orthodox. In any case all human beings are heretics, that is, choosers. His interpretation is a choice, a heresy, just as orthodox Christianity itself is a heresy: 'A series of acceptable takes/mis-takes that have come to constitute mainstream Christianity.'

'Jesus demands to be displaced so that one can get to what he is about. Jesus is not the object of the message he preached. The proclamation of the kingdom gives way to the reality he proclaimed.'

Thomas Sheehan is a remarkable example of the many people who, although they remain loyal members of the traditional great churches, nevertheless do not accept the official dogmatic teaching, and whose outlook is very much akin to the liberal and radical position of the Unitarians. These are the 'unofficial' Christians, and they include many so-called 'ordinary' people, as well as academics.

The Rev Frank Walker is minister emeritus at Memorial Church, Cambridge. Photo by David Steers



Lecture series looks at 'The Future of Faith'

By Paul Hubbard

'The Future of Faith' is a three-part lecture series which aims to explore the future of Liberal Religion in uncertain times. The lectures are being held at Rawtenstall Unitarian Church and Unity Centre, which has recently undergone major renovation, and is now a modern, fully accessible worship space, with three rooms available for community hire.

The renovation was made possible by a grant from the Lancashire Collaborative Ministry, an initiative, which seeks to promote the Unitarian cause in East Lancashire, while pioneering new forms of ministry.

To celebrate the opening of the new Unity Centre, a programme of lectures on 'The Future of Faith' has been arranged at Rawtenstall, to be delivered by speakers who are leaders in their fields. The series has been jointly organised by the Lancashire Collaborative Ministry and Pendle Hill Quakers, and is supported by the Progressive Christianity Network. All are welcome at the lectures, and there is no entry charge, but donations to help with costs will be requested.

All the talks will provide an opportunity for audience participation – after the morning lecture, there will be a question and answer session, followed by a bring and share lunch. A workshop for group exploration of the themes will follow. Finally, there will be a wider audience discussion led by a panel.

All three lectures take place on Saturdays, with the day starting at 11 am and finishing by 3.15pm. Light refreshments will

be provided, with lunch being organised as a 'bring and share' occasion.

The first lecture is titled 'The Challenge of Liberal Theology in a time of declining liberalism' and will be presented by Rev Dr Paul Rasor on 6 October. Paul will examine the question of what kind of liberal religion is possible when liberalism of all kinds is under siege.

The second lecture, 'Rekindling the Spirit of Community – Restoring Depth in an age of Screens' is to be given by Matt Carmichael on 1 December. Matt will cover two questions: firstly, what does it take to build 'community' today?, and secondly: where can we find the inspiration to make these communities a reality?

The final lecture is titled 'Towards Third Millennium Christianity: Activism, Nonviolence and the Mystical Imperative' on 23 March. In this talk, the renowned spiritual writer, ecologist and environmental campaigner Alastair McIntosh will address the question of the relevance of the Christian religion in the modern, secular age.

For further information, please contact Paul Hubbard, Rawtenstall Unitarian Church, Bank Street, Rawtenstall, BB4 7QW. Or call on 07341932558; email admin@rawtenstallunitarians.org or see www.rawtenstallunitarians.org/events-1.

Paul Hubbard is a member of Padiham Unitarian Chapel, and is an administrator Rawtenstall Unitarian church.

Ahmadiyya Muslims, heretics like us

By Derek McAuley

We occasionally get surprising visitors at Essex Hall and earlier this year a young man from the Ahmadiyya Muslim community called in at reception. A week later I met with Asif Basit, Curator of the Ahmadiyya Archive and Research Centre and was pleased to take part in a video interview. So what is the connection between the Ahmadiyya Muslim community and British Unitarians?

We went searching in early editions of *The Inquirer* for 1924. I learned that Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad, the second Caliph of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community had come on a visit to England in 1924 to address the Conference of Living Religions of the Empire. During his stay in London, he received a cable from Qadian, the headquarters of the community in India, that an Ahmadi namely Maulvi Naematullah had been mercilessly stoned to death in Afghanistan on the orders of the then Amir of Kabul.

Their research has found that their leader held a meeting



Derek McAuley, right, looks up 'The Inquirer' of 1924 with Asif Basit, curator of the Ahmadiyya Archive and Research Centre.

with the press and other dignitaries in Essex Hall as a peaceful protest against the inhumane act of killing in the name of faith. This event was widely covered by the British press; including *Daily News*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Chronicle* and *Daily Telegraph*.

I also found *The Inquirer* of 4 October 1924 covered it too. The Rev J Tyssul Davis reported on the conference which *The Inquirer* had earlier described as 'unique' as until then there had been few opportunities in Britain to hear from living representatives of non-Christian faiths. The Caliph's talk to the conference was read by Sir Zafarullah Khan, who would have a distinguished political and diplomatic career in British India and then Pakistan.

His report led with the stoning of what he described as 'a young Stephen', a Biblical metaphor all would have understood. It was

reported that the highest ecclesiastical authority in Afghanistan had thrown the first stone. The resolution at the Essex Hall meeting was signed by, amongst others, HG Wells and Sir Francis Younghusband.

The persecution of the Ahmadiyya Muslims continues today; and in many ways has worsened, particularly in Pakistan. As chair of the British Chapter of the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF) I recently visited the Baitul Futuh Mosque, the largest in Europe, in Morden south London. This is global headquarters of the movement. I also attended an inquiry session in the House of Parliament on the persecution of Ahmadis and other religious minorities in Pakistan. The country's constitution and criminal law is being used directly and explicitly to target Ahmadi Muslims with hundreds being murdered. An Ahmadi who calls him or her self a Muslim is punishable by three years imprisonment.

What I find significant is that when your story and that of another community comes together, either today or in the past, there is an opportunity for reflection and learning. That Essex Hall, the historical and administrative centre of British Unitarianism, has a place in the story of the Ahmadis as well as our own community is surely to be celebrated as an early example of the rich interfaith heritage of our country and the role of Unitarians in promoting progressive religion. As Rev Davis wrote in *The Inquirer*, 'Why, these heathens, aliens, foreigners, heretics, are men like ourselves! They are our brothers. They can shame us in toleration, passion for truth, compassion, brotherliness.'

Derek McAuley is Chief Officer of the Unitarian General Assembly.

According to their website, alislam.org, members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community believe that Allah sent the prophet Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908) who, they say like Jesus, came to end religious wars, condemn bloodshed and reinstitute morality, justice and peace.

Situation Vacant

The Lancashire Collaborative Ministry (LCM) is looking for a full or part-time Minister or lay person to join its current Ministry team. This post could suit an experienced Minister or a lay person who would like to gain ministerial and social outreach experience within a faith community – for whom support could be available.

LCM is committed to enhancing Unitarian and Free Christian liberal values and working within local communities in projects promoting social justice and equality. It covers part of East Lancashire including congregations at Chorley, Padiham and Rawtenstall.

For further information, please contact
Dot Hewerdine
dothewerdine@btinternet.com

Penal Affairs Panel broadens mission

Now known as the Penal and Social Affairs Panel, it takes on problems beyond the prison walls. Chair **Bruce Chilton** summarises the work of the growing panel as further stories reveal some of the issues concerning members.

Until the 1990s, Unitarians had a strong interest in justice and the treatment of offenders. The British criminal justice system had a good reputation with the public and internationally. All seemed to be working well, at least on the surface.

The Unitarian's Penal Affairs Panel was created in 1992 following the Unitarian General Assembly's 'great concern at the poor conditions and regime at many local prisons.' The panel was 'to investigate the current situation on all matters of penal policy, to keep the denomination informed wherever possible of all developments, and to provide a liberal religious voice in response to issues arising out of current legislation.'

What had gone wrong? Perhaps the reason was a lack of

wider interest in criminal justice and imprisonment. The attitude of politicians was to 'leave criminal justice in the hands of the professionals'. But no one seemed to notice the reduction of government investment in prisons. By the 1990s, the massive investments by Victorians in building local prisons had been exhausted.

Politicians pounced upon the growing issues over prison overcrowding. The catch-phrase 'prison works' led a major attack on liberal attitudes, especially among the civil servants of the Home Office responsible for the running of the prison service and those responsible for rehabilitation and aftercare in the local government-run probation service.

Since 1992, the prisons, criminal justice and related systems such as asylum and immigration, have got into more and more difficulties. During the 2000s, justice became a major constitutional issue with the making of a Ministry of Justice. (See the House of Commons paper - House of Commons Library *The Creation of the Ministry of Justice* on: <https://bit.ly/2Dtvvj6>) The new Ministry became responsible for the administration of civil and criminal justice and the courts but also prisons and probation. The justice system has been

Elderly prisoners are the last served and sickest inmates

By Jo O'Sullivan

Prisons were intended to house the able bodied, the hostile and the young. But the demographics of prisons are changing with the number of prisoners aged over 60 increasing by 120% between 2002 and 2013. They represent 15% of the prison population.

The reasons for their increase are:

- Increased life expectancy.
- Harsher and longer sentences.
- Convictions of historical sex offenders among men and of women receiving long sentences for drug importation.

Services and provision for inmates often go to those who 'shout the loudest'. One elderly prisoner said, 'on our wing...the younger ones get the best cells, beds and chairs whereas we are stuck down the end with the leftovers. At mealtimes some of them push us aside in the queue and we have to wait until last. At exercise time we are often unlocked last, and by the time some of us have struggled to get out there is little time left to stretch our limbs...' [Doing Time: Prison Reform Trust]. Practical and physical problems counter the best of intentions. Cell doors are too narrow for wheelchairs (so are left outside the cell). Areas are inaccessible to many prisoners including showers, libraries and chapels.

Such 'an unsuitable environment, inadequate health care, lack of meaningful activity result in ageing prisoners doing 'harder time' than their younger counterparts.' [Mann].

Women report inconsistent access to health screening and medication that fails to follow them from prison to prison e.g. hormone replacement therapy being stopped without warning, leading to depression.

The NHS took over healthcare in prisons in 2006. This did provide a welcome improvement. However, standards of healthcare for prisoners remain below equivalence in the free society. Specialist health and social care for older people is not routinely available.

Dementia can be easily hidden in prison with daily life being regimented, rules heavily enforced and prisoners making few decisions.

(Continued on page 8)



'The younger ones get the best cells, beds and chairs whereas we are stuck down the end with the leftovers. At mealtimes some of them push us aside in the queue and we have to wait until last.'

akes on more causes and members

ensely political with vying between the different responsibilities. Since 1992, the numbers in UK prisons have doubled. The trickle justice legislation in 1992/3 has become a torrent since 2010. In September 2010, the UK prison population had reached a record 85,000. The current figure in 2018, according to the statistics published by the Ministry of Justice, is about 83,000. With about 10 children and youths in custody, about 2,500 persons in immigration detention and about 17,000 persons detained under Mental Health provisions, the total number of persons in 2018 detained by the UK exceeds 100,000.

How has the Penal Affairs Panel, now the Penal and Social Affairs Panel, performed over its 25 years? The Panel has presented each year a major social issue affecting justice and prisoners to the Unitarian General Assembly meetings. The attitudes to justice and prisoners of politicians and the public may have greatly hardened. The Unitarians have remained liberal in their attitudes towards prisoners and prisoners. Unitarian General Assemblies have discussed housing problems, votes for prisoners, books for prisoners, Human Rights and more.

The problems of prisoners have increasingly shown themselves

to be deepened reflections of society's problems, such as education, immigration, poverty, housing, care for children, care for the elderly, inequality and the provision of justice and legal aid.

The panel has kept up its production of 'issues' papers and, with the internet, these go to more Unitarians than ever. The lobbying of Government, politicians and others with that 'liberal religious voice' of the GA's resolution in 1992 continues. More Unitarians recognise and take action on society's social problems. The expansion of the panel's remit to include social affairs has swelled the panel with new, enthusiastic recruits.

Why do Unitarians cling to liberal attitudes to justice and prisoners? The reason surely springs from the Unitarian principles of 'Freedom, Reason and Tolerance'. Prisoners are people who will rejoin the wider society we hope without further offending. The liberal attitudes of Unitarians to justice and imprisonment are both logical and compassionate.

Bruce Chilton is chair of the Penal and Social Affairs Panel.

For more information on the panel, contact him on bruce_chilton@hotmail.com

Why should Unitarians care about housing?

by Jenny Jacobs

Housing is one of the most divisive social issues of our time. It is one of the ways in which inequalities in our society are not just being perpetuated, but are worsening year by year.

Housing inequality divides the generations, with housing wealth concentrated in the hands of the over-40s, leaving home ownership an impossible dream for many of the under-40s – unless they are able to call on the 'Bank of Mum and Dad'. By 2017 the Bank of Mum and Dad was rivaling the 9th-largest mortgage provider in the UK in terms of money given or lent, according to Legal & General.¹

It also divides those lucky enough to have bought their homes at a time when the income-to-house price multiplier was lower than it is now, from those who couldn't afford it even then. The number of pensioners renting privately is at an all-time high – elderly people managing on small incomes and with no long-term security in their homes. Loss of a private-sector tenancy is currently the biggest single reason why anyone becomes homeless².

Even if we are amongst those lucky enough to own our own homes, we may well have children or grandchildren for whom home ownership, or even a secure tenancy at an affordable rent, is an unrealisable fantasy.

But it doesn't have to be like this. One thing, which could ease the housing crisis, is to return to the days of mass public house building to let at genuinely affordable social rents. Following the Second World War, this was undertaken by Conservative and Labour governments alike, and public house-building always made up a significant proportion of housing delivery nationally. It was only with the advent of Margaret Thatcher's 'Right to Buy' policy in 1980 that the existing stock began to be sold off in large numbers and new social house-building ground to a halt.

The major house-builders are not set up to meet housing need, and relying on them for the delivery of housing for all is a fruitless exercise. They are geared towards making profits for their shareholders through the incidental production of just as many houses as will keep profits – and prices – high. Sir Oliver Letwin's Independent Review,

which focuses on the huge gap between planning permissions granted and actual build out of housing, finds that 'The fundamental driver of build out rates once detailed planning permission is granted for large sites appears to be the "absorption rate" – the rate at which newly constructed homes can be sold into (or are believed by the house builder to be able to be sold successfully into) the local market without materially disturbing the market price.'³

Councils and housing associations are not reliant on making profits and can build according to demand, rather than trickling out houses to maintain high prices. New social rents could be tied to local incomes rather than the current 'Affordable Rent' standard, which is based on a 20% discount from market value. In many parts of the country this is still unaffordable. And the younger generation, so often disenfranchised from home ownership, and pensioners too, could be given secure tenancies at genuinely affordable rents which, in the case of the younger generation, could enable them to save for a deposit should they wish to buy a home eventually, whilst the older generation could relax, knowing that at least their home is secure and they can enjoy it without fear of being made homeless.

So Unitarians should care about housing. It's one of the biggest drivers of inequality, between rich and poor, between young and old. In the interests of a fairer, more inclusive society, it's vital that this issue is tackled.

To find out what actions you might take, see the Penal and Social Affairs Panel Issues Paper 21 "Housing – the issues and how to fix them" on <https://bit.ly/2IbuuLd>

Jenny Jacobs is a member of the Penal and Social Affairs Panel.



More PSAP news on page 8.

Safeguards are needed for 'detention'

By Sara Wilcox

How many people over the years have been removed from their homes against their will, in particular people with dementia? When I was 19 my grandmother went into a care home, as her dementia was too much for my grandfather to cope with. I will never forget a lady at that care home who also had dementia and who always came up to me asking me to lend her the bus fare because she was sure that her husband and children were waiting in vain for their tea in her house in Birkenhead. That lady could not leave the care home because the door was always locked, but under what law was she being held? When people are sectioned there is a system for challenging it, but with involuntary admissions to care homes there was no way of addressing peoples' 'detention'.

All this changed with the Bournwood case in 1997. The case involved a man with autism (known as HL) who had displayed challenging behaviour at his day centre and was subsequently admitted to Bournwood Hospital where he was held, without being sectioned, for 5 months. After he was released his foster carers took up a case for him based on Article 5 of the Human Rights Act – the Right to Liberty and Security. The case was pursued at the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) for a declaration that HL had been deprived of his liberty unlawfully and the ECtHR ruled in favour of the complainants.

In order to incorporate this outcome into UK law, the Mental Capacity Act 2005 laid out the new Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS). This introduction to the law means that if anyone is potentially subject to a 'restrictive intervention' they are entitled to a DoLS assessment.



Pixabay photo

A restrictive intervention might be anything from cot sides on a bed, or removal of a person from their home into care. If they are vocally opposing the intervention, a DoLS must be instigated. If they lack capacity to consent but may be being coerced into complying with a restrictive intervention, a DoLS must be instigated. A referral is made to the Supervisory Body (the local authority or NHS) and

the process is triggered: a Best Interests Assessor will collect a body of information regarding the decision to restrain the individual, and an Independent Mental Capacity Advocate (IMCA) will ensure that the individual's voice is heard. If it is deemed that the restrictive intervention is being applied in the best interests of the individual then the intervention stands.

Please note that DoLS is currently under review following an enquiry by the Lords Select Committee. For more information visit www.gov.uk and search for DoLS.

Sara Wilcox, a member of the PSAP, founded and runs a charity, Pathways Through Dementia, which specialises in the legal aspects of the dementia journey. For information about DoLS, paying for care, Lasting Powers of Attorney and/or welfare benefits contact:

0203 540 5940 OR email swilcox@pathwaysthroughdementia.org.



Endnotes

- 1 <https://bit.ly/2NBqPMD>
- 2 <https://bit.ly/2AbezKU>
- 3 <https://bit.ly/2lzm1XO>

Many ways to help elderly prisoners

(Continued from page 6)

This is a very difficult situation for an already overstretched Prison Service. Nevertheless, there are some examples of good practice which include designated cells, specialist wings and widening of cell doors. Some prisons have a buddy system for care of the elderly (to help with dressing and washing) with buddies paid for their work. Many prisons have links with the voluntary sector to improve services to older prisoners. Conditions may improve further with the use of technologies such as tele and internet medicine.

Stubbornly, the plight of the older prisoner remains low on the policy and strategy agenda. These problems will only increase as we, and they, get older.

What can you do?

1. Support and volunteer for RECOOP (Resettlement and care for older ex-offenders and prisoners). They offer a range of interventions and support to promote healthy lifestyles, good mental and physical health and all round well-being to reduce isolation and encourage offenders to take control of their lives and become more independent whilst in prison (see

<http://www.recoop.org.uk>)

2. Become a prison visitor through the National Association of Official Prison Visitors (www.naopv.com)

3. Volunteer for your local prison chaplaincy service.

4. Contact your local prison governor to see what provision has been made for the older prisoner (see appendix 6 of 'Doing Time' by the Prison Reform Trust). Get it on the Governor's agenda.

5. Given their age and low recidivism risk a case could be made for some to be released under a home detention curfew; and for those deemed unsuitable for release a secure-care facility, within a prison setting, could provide the assistance required [Howard League: Madeleine Hughes]. Could this unpopular cause be one that could be championed by the Unitarian movement?

Jo O'Sullivan is a member of the Penal and Social Affairs Panel.



Beep-beep! The organist phones it in

Are robots taking over? Driverless cars seem to have dropped from the headlines, which suits me. I have not grasped the point of them, or how they would work. And what about the so-called cashless society and the moves to get rid of cheques? How would that work? Our local newspaper frequently shows pictures of sponsored marathon-runners or cyclists or Santas on a Fun Run, handing over one of those giant cheques to their chosen charity. What will they do if such payment methods disappear?

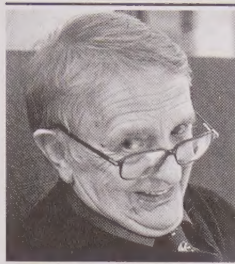
As for churchgoing, the prospect of an all-electronic, cashless society prompts me to muse again on cashless giving. Would it make the life of church treasurers easier? The situation worsens as we learn that ATMs are disappearing. There are hundreds fewer 'holes in the wall' on the high street. When my sons were small, we had a long-running joke. Out in town, I would sometimes say, 'I've got to call at the bank to buy some money.' This brought hilarity, as they replied, 'But you will need to have some money to buy the money!' (I've often thought I would like to put that simplistic conundrum to some high-powered bankers, when I read of trading in money between banks. My understanding of economics is blurred. I'm sure I'm not alone.)

But if ATMs go completely, does this herald the end of cash? Imagine a Sunday service when it is time for the offertory. Would congregants reach for their cell phones, call up the church bank details and with a cheery 'beep', make their donation?

There's more. I've learned that with the appropriate 'app', it is now possible to switch on a central heating system remotely. Imagine the scene. Sunday morning over breakfast, the caretaker (or even the minister) reaches for the phone and checks the weather. 'Aha! Better put the heating on.' One press of the key and lo, the church warms up nicely in time for the service. And if he or she arrives home for Sunday lunch, and wonders if they've forgotten to switch everything off, no more tiresome journey all the way back to church to check. Cell phone out, beep, beep, job done.

Then there are electric organs and pianos in churches. I've already experienced announcing the last hymn, then, as the organ played the tune, the organist slipped out to put the kettle on in the kitchen ready for coffee hour, popping back in time for the closing music. Now I hear rumours of organists taking a whole Sunday off, but programming in all the hymn tunes and the music for the offertory in advance. All that's then needed is a timely pressing of a remote control and the service proceeds with an empty organ seat. Whatever next?

I've been in a congregation in Boston, Massachusetts when every week the service was also a live radio broadcast. Will the day come when we can all stay at home, the minister too? I dread the thought, and delight when I read social and political commentators urging us to participate more in community activities, stressing the importance of real human contact. So, looking for a community to join? There is good evidence that churchgoing is good for you. People who participate in organised religion tend to be happier, healthier and live longer than those who don't.



Funny Old World

By John Midgley

Several of our churches and chapels opened for National Heritage Open Days. I've always enjoyed these events and have frequently heard the comment, 'Do you know, I've passed this chapel hundreds of times and never been inside. I had no idea it was as lovely as this!' On the whole we are good at welcoming visitors, avoiding any evangelical pressure and having a fairly relaxed sense of the sacredness of our worship spaces.

At Pepper Hill Chapel, in a small village up on the hills near Halifax, the baptismal and marriage registers were laid out, bringing such cries as, 'Oh, look, there's my grandma! She was married here.' This year's Open Days had a special theme, *Extraordinary Women*, marking 100 years of women's suffrage. For several congregations, the obvious Unitarian choice to display was the well-known Elizabeth Gaskell. More than one chose to tell of the less well-known the Rev Gertrude von Petzold, the first woman to be trained and recognised as a minister in England. This had a poignant feel for me. Gertrude's last ministry in this country was at Waverley Road Church in Birmingham, now a Gurdwara. This was the church I joined as a teenager and I remember seeing the large framed photograph of Gertrude in the vestry. Sad to think that the church was firebombed during WW1 by some less than welcoming locals objecting to an 'enemy' German presence.

Unable to get naturalisation, she returned to her homeland along with what Keith Gilley in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography described as 'her friend and helper' Rosa Widmann. A great loss to our movement, Gertrude was an active feminist, suffragist and popular preacher. She filled the large churches where she ministered, and photographs of her were sold in local shops. As different from being a robot as one could get, I'd say. Today, she may even have considered marriage to 'her friend and helper'.

Sad to read of the death, aged 96 years, of comedian Denis Norden. A fan since my boyhood, I enjoyed his delightful radio broadcasts with colleague, Frank Muir. I loved his wry, self-deprecatory humour. Invited to an RAF reunion, he pulled out his old uniform from his wardrobe and was dismayed to discover, 'that the only item that still fitted was the tie.'

In war-time RAF days he accidentally stumbled on the recently liberated Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Horrified, he organised a food collection to feed the desperate inmates as well as starving children in a nearby village. Perhaps it was this impulse towards generosity plus his Jewish immigrant family background that led him to vary the old saying and observe, 'Immigration is the sincerest form of flattery.' Brexiters take note.

The Rev John Midgley is a retired Unitarian minister.

Letters to the Editor

Welcome more forms of Unitarian ministry

To the Editor:

I should like to add my thoughts on the recent very interesting article 'Only Unitarians should be on the roll' contributed by the Rev Sheena Gabriel (28 July) and to agree wholeheartedly with the points made by the Rev John Harley in his letter on this subject featured in the 22 September edition. Here in the West Country we have no more than a dozen or so places of worship which are spread across a large area (from Cirencester to Plymouth) with fairly long distances in terms of travelling between most of them. This, together with affordability, does not make us a particularly viable proposition for attracting Unitarian trained Ministers; we do treasure the two active ministers we have and, occasionally, a retired Unitarian Minister. We are fortunate when they visit us, perhaps once a year, to lead services and we are grateful all the while being careful not to run the risk of 'burning them out'!

So, that leaves the rest of the work in sustaining a Unitarian presence in the hands of lay Leadership. I believe that sits at the heart of the problem and I'm sure it's an issue which applies to other parts of the country. We have a very committed and experienced number of people who carry out this work and, frankly, without them we would be sunk. Increasing age and declining energy levels can only weaken this structure if steps aren't taken to find a solution. I have to ask why we would be so restrictive when it comes to not embracing lay Leaders/Interfaith Ministers.

I find myself agreeing with the Rev Harley that, surely, some programme can be formulated which would provide a vehicle by which they may be enabled to become part of Unitarian congregational ministry. Of course, they need to be conversant and understanding of the Unitarian ethos; that goes without saying. I do appreciate that one has to be particularly careful about vetting and accepting to the Roll such lay Leaders/Interfaith Ministers. The few Interfaith Ministers we have here in the West Country attend Unitarian

Chapels as congregants and some become members. Surely that should be actively encouraged and welcomed? As the Rev Harley wrote, 'I would love to see us apply this to our vibrant tapestry of ministry in all its forms.' Using due diligence, this opportunity to strengthen us is something requiring serious re-thinking. We should not push the opportunity away and not adopt the view that 'we've always done it this way.' We are not in a position of strength to continue to do so.

Bernice Lashbrook
Bridgwater Unitarians
Western Union District

Don't judge all Pharisees by a few

To the Editor:

I greatly enjoyed reading the article 'Scarcity, Abundance or Just Enough' by the Rev Brian Neely in your edition of 8 September. I have reservations, however, about the sentences where he states that the 'prosperity gospel' wraps the lie about the potential of everyone attaining material abundance 'in theology and links to the love of God, creating a faith of comfort for the Pharisees....' Whilst this view may accord with popular sentiment about the Pharisees, I would respectfully refer the Rev Neely to these words by the Rev Father Fergal MacEoinin published in the Irish Times of 1 September last: 'The vast majority of the Pharisees were excellent people trying to live the Law of Moses as faithfully as they possibly could. Within their community there would have been a cohort of bigots, zealots and pompous gits among their number. Of course there were; like many other human groupings, the hypocrites and bullies are the ones we remember'. Fr MacEoinin goes on to say, 'With the possible exception of organised crime, there are probably no associations in the world where the majority of membership is bad'. As Unitarians I think we should be the first to be careful with our views of a group of people about whom so little is known.

Gavin Lloyd
Bicester

We must admire Jehovah's Witnesses' evangelism

To the Editor:

John Midgley, writing about the Jehovah's Witnesses, (*Inquirer*, 8 September) betrays a twinge of envy? 'I see them coming and going and they occasionally turn up on the doorstep ... more recently they have taken to evangelising on the street.' Whatever we may think about JW theology, the enthusiasm with which they put Christian scripture to a sceptical public is impressive. Although their interpretation of the Bible can be naive, their commitment to what they perceive to be the Christian life is genuine and not all gloomy.

John's judgment that 'there can be no spirit of free inquiry and little if any love, joy or peace' needs to be set alongside the latitude for interpretation offered at the midweek scripture exposition and the teamwork which brings members into friendship and effective pastoral care of each other. This, I believe, explains why despite a poor press and abuse scandals Kingdom Halls thrive.

Graham Murphy
Liverpool

Southampton must be talking to an angel

To the Editor:

Since having a heart operation I have had a tough time in and out of hospital – very disappointing. However I do rejoice to tell you if you haven't heard of the incredible work done in our church (Edmund Kell) by our Angelica Kennard who is indeed an angel sent to save our church. She looks, as I do, at the *whole* building and offers a huge variety of activities especially with the homeless folk who come to our Monday lunch.

Increasingly more of them are drawn into activities such as creating banners for church and lunch club. They are invited to baked potato evenings with excellent food often donated free by supermarkets; sometimes there is a film. Angelica plays the squeezebox. Polish lads help with drumming. The walls have gorgeous wall hangings; the notice boards are something amazing. Her disabled friend

(Continued on next page)

Edmund Kell Chapel creates new community by opening the building

(Continued from previous page)

sits at the front of the church and chats to passers by.

She offers mediation, she plans circle dancing and has a notice saying 'mother and baby group'. Not operative yet, but like she says, 'If there isn't a notice there won't be a group'.

Her latest idea is to buy the garages for sale nearby and make them into units for the homeless. Perhaps the Quakers who are nearby might like to help fund

this. Some of these are only ideas as she has been coming for three days a week from Bridport (a very lively church) and staying here funded by the church.

Notices proclaim 'This church is open' and it has never before been open so often. It is buzzing with life. A tape recorder plays lively tunes at the front door. Indeed she is bringing the chapel alive.

The main point is her view of the building as an entity. She does take services and I hope the congregation

will increase. But what she is doing is really inspiring, long may she continue her wacky ideas including a free hair set service to the cleaner who is having a difficult time, a job for a homeless chef with her son. Her gift is to offer friendship to all and to create a wonderful harmony among all who come.

Brenda Knopf
Southampton

Chief Officer General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches

Salary £50000 negotiable

London WC2

An opportunity to change the way we live and make a difference

The General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches (GA) respects all those who follow different paths. We have no set statement of belief or creed. We seek a Chief Officer to lead the work of the GA and its small team in London in support of its member congregations in Great Britain as part of the worldwide Unitarian and Unitarian Universalist community.

The Chief Officer will provide transformational leadership and support to the GA in the promotion of Unitarian values and beliefs. The role will lead on:

- Creating and implementing a long-term transformational strategy for the GA in order to support the growth of Unitarianism and Free Religion
- Developing an external communications strategy to raise the public profile of the work of the GA and its members.
- Working with ecumenical and interfaith leaders and other groups to promote cooperation and freedom of belief.
- Cultivating good internal communications with Unitarians and Free Christians across Great Britain

You will be professionally qualified (or by experience) and fully in sympathy with the values and ethos of Unitarianism and free religion. You will be passionate about growing Unitarianism. Essential attributes include emotional maturity and outstanding communication skills. You will be used to working at top level, have a record of successful leadership of transformational change, and have well-developed influencing skills. You will have experience in building collaborative working relationships. You will need to travel nationally and occasionally internationally.

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Closing date: 19 October 2018

First interviews: 15 November 2018

www.unitarian.org.uk



New Unitarian College appoints tutor

The TED project is now at an end, and the new Unitarian College has emerged!

Many dedicated Unitarians have freely given of their time and expertise to create a new college which will initially train students for professional ministry in Unitarian and Free Christian Churches. Later, the college will provide lifelong learning for all Unitarians.

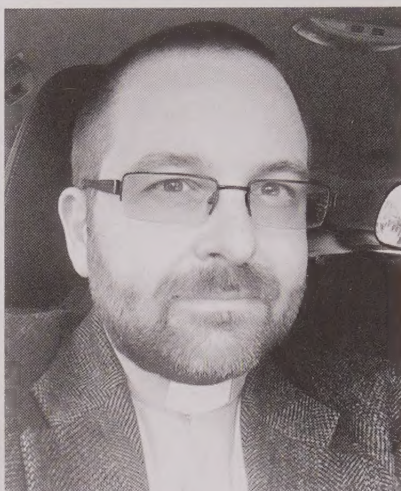
During the life of the TED project a governance group, course design group, curriculum group, and an assessment group all worked hard to bring the college into being and to prepare it as a training institution for the Unitarian movement.

The college already has students, a curriculum based on competencies set by the General Assembly (GA), and now a ministry tutor. The Rev Ant Howe has been appointed to the post.

Ant has already been working with Unitarian College Students, having co-led the orientation session for new students, assisted the students in formulating their Individual Learning Contracts, and recently co-led the very first Unitarian College Residential Sessions held at Woodbrooke Quaker Centre.

Following his appointment Ant said, 'I am delighted to be appointed to the college staff as its first ever ministry tutor. I feel so excited to have the opportunity to work with the students who will go on to serve our congregations as professional ministers. It will be an incredible blessing to walk with them during their ministerial training and formation.'

Ant was involved in Lay Leadership before training for the ministry at Unitarian College Manchester. Since 2006 he has served as minister at Kingswood, which has enjoyed sustained growth and development. Ant also served as minister with



Ant Howe

Warwick Unitarians from 2006-2014. He holds a degree in religion and theology, a postgraduate diploma in contextual theology, as well as qualifications in coaching and mentoring and advanced training skills. He will retain a reduced role at Kingswood as he settles into his new role of ministry tutor.

Students on the Unitarian College Ministry Training Pathway will gather for intensive residential sessions several times a year at locations around the country. These sessions replace the model of attending a physical college every week, though the amount of time students spend together will still be comparable.

The Ministry Tutor along with visiting tutors will provide the content. During the college sessions students will work towards some of the GA competencies which cannot be achieved elsewhere (previously termed Unitarian Studies), participate in lectures and tutorials, engage in the process of ministerial formation, and learn some of the practical skills of ministry. There are associated assignments to complete, including projects which must be completed on placement, written assignments, and modules to be completed online. Students must also complete a minimum of two placements during their training.

Students will be visited regularly by the ministry tutor who will support them during their training and whilst they complete their externally validated academic theology qualifications.

A person trained in assessment process will assess each student against the GA competences to ensure that the student's training has been robust and thorough.

Harris Manchester College Oxford will continue to offer location-based training.

Ant will take up his post as Ministry Tutor from 1 January.

Unitarian exhibits paintings at Conan Doyle Centre

An exhibition of paintings reflecting 'Oneness' by Katie Hall, a member of the Unitarian Society for Psychical Studies and Kendall Unitarians, runs until 12 December at the Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Centre in Edinburgh. Katie hopes the exhibition, titled 'Luminescence', of 'pararealism' paintings will help communicate the Unitarian ethos to the wider world.

Katie and her husband, John Pickering, have presented their photographic experiences, which began with what are commonly called 'orbs', at the Unitarian General Assembly meetings. For many months they could only photograph this strange phenomenon in their front room. Unlike some who believe such things to be angels or spirits Katie and John saw in the orbs, circles and spheres, symbols of Oneness. This eventually led them to the Unitarians for whom Oneness is especially meaningful.

As active members of Kendal Unitarian Chapel, Katie and John often held Unitarian meetings in their front room.

When their friend Dr Don Kerr lent them a copy of *The Social History of Kendal* by Roger Bingham, they learnt that Quaker/Unitarians met in their home in the 1840s – in the same front room where Katie and John first photographed orbs, the symbols of Oneness which ultimately led them to join Kendal Unitarian Chapel. This synchronistic event formed a circle in time, reflecting again the principle of Oneness at work. All this and more is reflected in Katie's 'Luminescence' exhibition.

Entry to the Luminescence exhibition is free. A book and an inspirational music CD reflecting the exhibition is available from the Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Centre. For further information: The Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Centre, 25 Palmerston Place, Edinburgh EH12 5AP Tel: 0131625 0700 email: info@arthurconandoylecentre.com website: www.arthurconandoylecentre.com Or contact Katie directly by email at: kctcbeyond@outlook.com